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C O N F I D E N T I A L MASERU 000297

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FOR A/S FRAZER AND AF/S DIR - D. MOZENA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 6/22/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KICC](#) [PINR](#) [LT](#)
SUBJECT: ARTICLE 98 AGREEMENT BETWEEN LESOTHO / U.S. SIGNED JUNE 21, 2006

REF: (A) AMB / AF/S DIR FAX DTD JUNE 21 (B) MASERU 292 AND PREVIOUS

CLASSIFIED BY: June Carter Perry, Ambassador, EXEC , STATE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) Ambassador Perry and Lesotho's Foreign Minister Moleleki signed the Article 98 Agreement the morning of June 21, 2006 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

¶2. (C) We signed the Agreement privately on the date indicated; the Minister thought there would be some discussion with the Government about whether they want to have a public announcement at some point.

¶3. (C) The signing of this agreement comes one week after the Deputy Prime Minister advised Ambassador that Cabinet had approved the text and almost a year to the date (June 10, 2005) that Cabinet had had a full discussion of the proposed Agreement. At that time, former Attorney General Fine Maeme (now the GOL's PermRep at the UN) reportedly presented a strongly worded anti-agreement argument. The fundamental opposing language was based on information provided by the EU.

¶4. (C) Comment: The June 21st signing represents 18 months of negotiations between the Ambassador with the Foreign Minister as well as the senior members of Cabinet and the Prime Minister himself in addition to a post requested bilateral in September 2005 between the Prime Minister and Assistant Secretary Frazer. As we have indicated for nearly 2 years, negotiations with the Government of Lesotho require a significant amount of time and patience. However, we believe that following our private discussion with the Prime Minister two weeks ago that his positive position towards this agreement solidified significantly. We also believe that with Lesotho assuming the Chairmanship of SADC, this signing comes at a very significant time in terms of our engagement with the region as Prime Minister Mosisili and his team will play a substantive role in regional developments. End Comment

PERRY